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Effects Of Communication Apprehension, Biological Gender, And Gender Stereotypes On Non-Occasion Greeting Card Sending

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EFFECTS OF COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION,
BIOLOGICAL GENDER, AND GENDER STEREOTYPES
ON NON-OCCASION GREETING CARD SENDING

ADAMS

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Effects of Communication Apprehension, Biological Gender
and Gender Stereotypes on Non-Occasion Greeting Card Sending
(TITLE)

BY

Elizabeth Ellen Adams

THESIS

**SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
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**IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
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**I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING
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Effects of Communication Apprehension, Biological Gender,
and Gender Stereotypes on Non-Occasion Greeting Card Sending

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December, 1991

This study empirically investigated the relationship between non-occasion greeting card sending and communication apprehension, biological gender, and gender stereotypes. Subjects were 320 students enrolled in Introduction to Speech Communication at Eastern Illinois University and were tested using the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension, the Bem Sex Role Inventory, and five situational encounters measuring pre-dating behavior, friendship behavior, and comforting behavior. Two questions regarding the safety and effort required of various communication media, including sending non-occasion greeting cards, were included. Non-occasion greeting cards were operationally defined as those cards not sent honoring a specific holiday or custom, but which are sent to convey everyday, friendship sentiments.

This study was done following a pilot study (1990) entitled "The Communicative Impact of Non-Occasion Greeting Cards." This study revealed a biological gender relationship to non-occasion greeting card sending.

Hypotheses tested were the following. Females and feminine subjects would send more non-occasion greeting cards in pre-dating, comforting and friendship scenarios than would male and masculine subjects. High communication apprehensive subjects were predicted to avoid face-to-face communication in favor of using written communication media such as non-occasion greeting cards.

The majority of subjects preferred visiting in person over using non-occasion greeting cards to convey sentiments. Significant results were that biological gender is the only variable that affects non-occasion greeting card sending. The gender stereotypes using the Bem Sex Role Inventory did not significantly predict card-sending, nor did communication apprehension scores measured on the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension.

The Bem Sex Role Inventory, while validated in numerous studies, may no longer measure personality characteristics that are gender-specific. Implications of this study are that greeting card industries are correct in researching biological gender and that suffering from high communication apprehension does not predict that subjects will send non-occasion greeting cards to avoid face-to-face interaction.

Effects of Communication Apprehension,
Biological Gender, and Gender Stereotypes
on Non-Occasion Greeting Card Sending

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Abstract

This study empirically investigated the relationship between non-occasion greeting card sending and communication apprehension, biological gender, and gender stereotypes. Subjects were 320 students enrolled in Introduction to Speech Communication at Eastern Illinois University and were tested using the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension, the Bem Sex Role Inventory, and five situational encounters measuring pre-dating behavior, friendship behavior, and comforting behavior. Significant results were that biological gender is the only variable that predicts non-occasion greeting card sending. Implications of this study were that greeting card industries are correct in researching biological gender and that suffering from high communication apprehension does not predict that subjects will send non-occasion greeting cards to avoid face-to-face interaction.

Introduction

The sending of greeting cards for no specific occasion such as holidays or rituals provides an interesting area to study from a communication standpoint. Based on results found in an earlier pilot study on college students' non-occasion card sending habits (Adams, 1990), the significance of this phenomenon was substantiated. Since there are no particular occasions to elicit sending these cards, a valid research question is "Why do people send non-occasion greeting cards?"

Research confirms that there are certain sentiments people are apprehensive about expressing and conveying those sentiments in a greeting card may be used as a substitute for face-to-face interaction (Klopf & Cambra, 1979). The pilot study suggested that the practice of sending cards was related to gender (Adams, 1990).

Review of Literature

Communication cannot be avoided, but many individuals would choose other ways of conveying certain sentiments if available. People who prefer not to orally communicate are said to suffer from communication apprehension. This paper will review the various definitions and subgroups of this condition as well as the effects it has on the behavior of the individual and attempt to measure its relationship to non-occasion greeting card sending.

Communication apprehension (CA) was originally conceptualized as "a broadly based anxiety related to oral communication" (McCroskey, 1984b, p. 13). McCroskey also said it is "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons" (McCroskey, 1984b, p. 13).

The label "communication apprehension" can deal with various constructs as follows: general context/trait, or situational (McCroskey, 1984b). Generalized context is "a relatively enduring personality-type orientation toward communication in a given type of context" which can be separated into four types based upon the object of fear: public speaking, speaking in classes or meetings, small group discussions, or dyadic interactions (McCroskey, 1984b, p. 16). Trait and situational CA constructs are not mutually exclusive, but should be viewed on a continuum of extreme trait to extreme state.

Situational CA is "a transitory orientation toward communication with a given person or group" (McCroskey, 1984b, p. 18). A situation is a "unique organization of persons, things, and actions as perceived by an organism" and is difficult to manipulate and measure because of the large amount of variables that enter in (Biggers & Masterson, 1984, p. 383). They also agree that CA can claim a trait status, but believe that it is primarily

situationally-bound. It appears that for a person with high levels of trait apprehension, the impact of state CA will be so much that the effects of the immediate situation are minimal (Booth-Butterfield & Butterfield, 1986).

Duran (1983) and Duran and Kelly (1988) described CA is the opposite of communication competence because the competent communicator tries to decrease the tension in a situation. McCroskey clarified that low CA's do not necessarily approach communication, but simply have no fear of it (Beatty, 1987, p. 214).

Mulac and Wiemann (1984) comment that during the act of communicating, the speaker's experienced anxiety is consequential only to the extent that the audience perceives that anxiety and makes attributions about the speaker based upon those perceptions. These researchers also contend that each variable should be measured in time of its extent or rated severity of occurrence, not simply whether it occurred in a given period. However, this does not seem to apply to the interpersonal dimension of sending greeting cards because the receiver is removed and cannot see the sender to perceive the level of CA.

The cause of CA has not been found, but several patterns have been noticed. Phillips (1968) found a disproportionately large percentage of ethnic college students will develop high CA. This has been linked to the

difficulty in learning new languages and lack of reinforcement from parents who may not know the foreign language (McCroskey, 1984; Klopff, 1984). Richmond and Robertson (1977) found that children reared in rural environments are more likely to develop high CA than those reared in urban areas (in McCroskey, 1984b). Determinants of situational CA are related to novelty of environment, audiences, and roles (Daly & Buss, 1984). The environmental view cites evidence that low valuation of oral interaction is particularly common in lower socio-economic groups (Phillips, 1968). Phillips agrees with McCroskey (1984b) that CA can be attained through modeling where children emulate the behavior of their parents, and in homes where they observe hostility of parents to each other, children may not learn there are social rewards to be reaped from communication effectiveness. When the risks of communication outweigh the rewards gained from it, one usually develops CA (McCroskey, 1984b).

Not only are parallels drawn between reticence and CA, but also between loneliness and CA in their avoidance of oral communication. It seems that lonely people are viewed as ones who listen but are uncomfortable with and unwilling to communicate with others, thus projecting an unattractive image for deep intimate information (Wheless, Zakahi, & Chan, 1988; Zakahi & Duran 1982). Zakahi and Duran (1985)

found inappropriate levels of disclosure should inhibit relational development and contribute to loneliness. People who define themselves as lonely exhibit characteristics which inhibit others' disclosure to them. They also derive their feelings about themselves from interactions with other people and seek out those who confirm their self-images, even when the self-image is not entirely positive (McCroskey, Richmond, Daly, & Falcione, 1977).

Three behavioral responses result from CA. McCroskey (1984b) has identified them as follows: communication avoidance, communication withdrawal (characterized by absolute silence), communication disruption (characterized by disfluencies in verbal communication or unnatural nonverbal behaviors), or overcommunication/overcompensation (which explains how some students suffering from CA become speech communication majors!) It is primarily those with high CA who demonstrate dysfunctional communicative behaviors (Lashbrook, Lashbrook, Bacon, & Salinger, 1979).

These behaviors manifest themselves in several ways. Physiologically, the most popular responses are those related to the circulatory system such as increased heart rates, skin conductivity, palmar sweating, and brain temperature (Beatty, 1984). Isolated behaviors have been linked to CA by Phillips (1968) as follows: shakiness, butterflies in stomach when speaking, breaking off

communication with others, inability to communicate with important people, views of self as on the fringes of social interaction, apologetic when ideas were challenged and when criticized, and the inability to talk to parents. The only effect perceived to be universal across both individuals and types of CA is an internally experienced feeling of discomfort (McCroskey, 1984b). Miller (1984) thinks that this personal dissatisfaction compounds the problem faced in forming relationships as personal acceptance and social facility are bound together. This vicious cycle is confirmed by McCroskey, Richmond, Daly, and Falcione (1977) who say that self-esteem is a function of interacting with others and, since that is avoided by the high CA person, he/she has a lowered self-image.

Communication apprehension may be linked to comforting behavior. Samter and Burleson (1984) found that subjects who reported finding communication with family and friends unrewarding engaged in a larger amount of comforting behavior. This relationship is unclear; perhaps persons who have had unhappy experiences in communication with intimate subjects are more sympathetic to and understanding of relational problems experienced by others.

However, the relationship to comforting was not supported by the research of Booth-Butterfield and Butterfield (1986) who discovered that individuals with high

CA generally had shorter interactions. Persons with high CA are also less willing to interact with and to provide comfort to another. Comforting communication is viewed as the management of everyday disappointments and is an interesting form of functional behavior, especially when viewed from the perspective of one who traditionally avoids communication.

The behaviors of those who suffer from CA cause them to be perceived by others in certain ways. In the occupational setting and initially in the job interview, more verbal applicants are perceived as more task-attractive, more competent, in need of less training for the job, and as having a greater likelihood for success. Furthermore, once employed, high CAs are less likely to be happy in their work than are other workers. Thus, they are more likely to be less productive and are more readily dismissed (Richmond, 1984).

Research into the dating practices of those with CA found interesting results. While Richmond found little or no impact on initial attraction when all ranges of CA scores were calculated, behaviors while on a date differ.

In a practice dating setting, high CAs differed in frequency and range of dating and causal interactions and with regard to the number of silences, speech latency, and pulse rate from low CAs (Curran, 1977).

It should be noted here that quietness in a dating relationship is not considered to be as bad for a woman as it is for a man because it may cause her to be viewed as submissive which may appeal to some males (Richmond, 1984).

However, high CAs have shown a strong tendency to marry. In a study of college graduates who suffered from high CA, over half of them were married within a year after completing their degrees (Richmond, 1984). No similar pattern was found for low CAs. If this marriage happens to end in divorce, high CAs seem to be more affected by losing what they may consider the "one and only," whereas a more extroverted partner would be more apt to start looking for another (Richmond, 1984).

The desired state of relationships with their peers is characterized as relatively bleak. High CAs were found not to be associated with a particular subgroup or were found to be in a subgroup of fellow high CAs. Many of the peers of high CAs would be labeled unpopular which could allow high CAs to have friends without having to suffer a lot of concern about social interaction with them. In general, the school is not a happy place for high CAs, both because of their apprehension about speaking out in class and in interacting with fellow classmates (Hurt & Pruss, 1978).

The relationships entered into by those suffering from CA show some patterns. Since friendship requires

communication, and many times, self disclosure, high CAs may have fewer friends and difficulty in developing long-lasting friendships and a tendency to find one or two friends and to hang on to them (Richmond, 1984). Highly verbal people involves themselves in far more social activities than do high CAs and, in so doing, give themselves more opportunity to meet new people and initiate friendships. High CAs go so far as to select dorm rooms in low interaction areas and report less roommate satisfaction (Duran & Zakahi, 1988).

Stress is a "concomitant function of context and we may observe that low CAs are less responsive to stress in terms of verbal behaviors" (Jordan & Powers, 1987, p. 299). High CAs seem to be impaired when the context of a situation is personal but the auditor is interpersonally distant.

Although there is little research that has been done to link communication apprehension to preferences for communicating by writing rather than by speaking, studies that have been conducted were done in the classroom. Unfortunately, many studies done on CA are done in elective speech communication classes; those people suffering from CA tend to not enroll in such courses (Phillips, 1968). Furthermore, one study found that over 50% of the students with high CA dropped a required public speaking course during the first three weeks of the course, just prior to the due date of the first speech (Richmond, 1984).

McCroskey performed a test in a classroom with high CA subjects and asked them to choose among delivering a ten-minute speech, writing a 2,500 word essay, or taking a test as a means of demonstrating mastery of material in an undergraduate speech communication class. Participants classified as high CA tended to avoid the public speaking option, while low CAs chose that option (Beatty, 1987). Beatty reported (1987) that Daly and Wilson's review of writing apprehension literature found a positive correlation between CA and writing apprehension which would indicate that a student would not select speaking or test-taking as ways of showing their understanding of a subject because they enjoyed those methods, but out of the desperation of an avoidance-avoidance situation.

A common type of written correspondence is the greeting card which is sent to convey a plethora of sentiments and in recognition of many occasions. The practice of sending non-occasion greeting cards is more salient with the independent variables involved in this study because senders are not required by obligation of a holiday or custom when card-sending is customary, but instead choose to communicate everyday thoughts by a card instead of by using other media. A pilot study entitled "The Communicative Impact of Non-Occasion Greeting Cards" (Adams, 1990), operationally defined non-occasion cards as those greeting cards that are

sent for no holidays, birthdays, or rituals (sympathy, marriage, etc.), but are intended to convey feelings of friendship.

Daly and Stafford (1984) found that females report a slightly greater, but not significantly higher amount of CA than do males. Beatty (1987) also found that under conditions allowing choices among alternative courses of action, CAs would be expected to avoid communication unless alternatives are perceived as more threatening than communicating. In many situations, people have the option of choosing to send a greeting card rather than orally communicating. The fact that females might be slightly more apt to substitute other media for oral communication could be supported by the fact that approximately 90% of all cards are purchased by females (Rosendahl, 1989).

However, McCroskey thought those people with apprehension about speaking would also be apprehensive about writing. Klopf and Cambra's research (1979) did not confirm that.

According to Waldrop (1989), 71% of friendship card buyers describe themselves as affectionate, funny, smart, and refined. The adjectives that high CAs tend to use to describe themselves do not correspond with those used by greeting card senders. Meer (1982) found that the most popular non-occasion cards are funny ones. The primary

function of humor in communication is to diffuse anxiety (Duran, 1983); anxiety is the chief feeling of CAs toward communication.

Cards virtually set the emotional range for Americans (Leo, 1986). As found in my pilot study when sending cards, 33% of men simply signed their names while only 14% of women did so. This indicates that women are more expressive with words in cards while men let the card lyrics speak entirely for them. McKinley (1982) explains that the practice of only signing one's name allows the sender to blame the card company if the card is not taken well by the recipient.

While the pilot study substantiated the relationship between non-occasion card sending and biological gender, research suggests that gender stereotypes (i. e. masculinity and femininity) are more accurate predictors of behavior than biological gender (i.e. male and female). Arliss (1991) reports that gender stereotypes influence communication. Research shows that people are very concerned with appropriate sex-behavior and when testing the gender dimension may choose the "socially desirable" answers. However, instruments such as the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) show that the traditional views of femininity and masculinity are as prevalent today as they were in the 1970's (Arliss, 1991, p. 18). Based on these traditional views of genders, people may expect certain

behaviors of specific genders and notice atypical responses.

Typical responses are that feminine subjects are expected to act more other-oriented and emotive than males. When Bem conducted her research on gender stereotypes, she was responding to past studies. Such studies associated masculinity with instrumental orientation, a cognitive focus on getting the job done or the problem solved and femininity with an expressive orientation, an affective concern for the welfare of others and harmony of the group. Bem et al. desired to give feminine subjects a fairer test of emotion functioning and verified that, for both men and women, sex typing does appear to restrict one's functioning. Masculine individuals of both sexes were high in independence, but low in nurturing, and feminine individuals of both sexes are high in nurturing, but low in independence (Bem et al., 1976, p. 1017).

Ballard-Reisch and Elton (1991) investigated the BSRI sixteen years after the scale was conceptualized to see if the items still represent current perceptions of gender behavior. They found that the terms "masculine" and "feminine" were the only adjectives still considered masculine and feminine. While the BSRI still measures different personality types, it may be measuring characteristics that have nothing to do with sex role stereotypes. The researchers would argue for "self-

directed" and "other-directed" as more descriptive categories than "masculine" and "feminine" for the clustering of such attributes (p. 14).

Further research related gender types to coping/comforting behavior and love relationships. The socialization theory of gender differences in coping stems from the fact that men are taught more active, problem-solving skills whereas women are taught more passive, emotion-focused responses (Rosario et. al., 1988, p. 57). Coleman and Ganong (1985) supported expectations that sex role would have a greater effect on feelings of love than would biological gender. They found that feminine respondents were consistently more loving than masculine respondents. Tannen proposed that bonding through troubles is widespread among women, common between women and men, and fairly uncommon between men (1990, p. 100).

Tannen also reports gender connections to written messages and the fact that in written correspondence, feminine subjects will be more relational oriented and masculine subjects will write on task-oriented items.

These studies suggest that gender preference may determine which subjects and scenarios elicit non-occasion greeting card sending. The practice of sending cards is an other-oriented activity through which subjects develop and maintain relationships and thus has the expectation of being

a feminine behavior. If relational development is viewed as a task, then card-sending could be considered both task and relational which would suggest this could be considered less gender-specific.

Future research is needed in the area of discovering which sentiments are more easily conveyed using written channels versus oral ones. This seems to be on the horizon as there is a Greeting Card Association that has more than 100 corporations in its membership and conducts research to chart buying trends in the industry. With more women entering the work force, there is an increasing possibility of them sending cards to co-workers.

Since Goodbody (1989) discovered that consumers were not satisfied with the available non-occasion cards because they did not express the range of emotions the senders wished to convey, constant attempts are made to keep the consumers' interests in mind so that this industry can continue to grow.

Phillips aptly stated, "Talk is the way we convey our personality" (1968, p. 51). Talk cannot be avoided in today's world, but when communication choices do exist, sometimes individuals choose to write their messages. Written and oral channels are not mutually exclusive, but can supplement one another very well. However, problems of communication effectiveness may occur when one channel

constantly substitutes for the other, as may often occur among individuals suffering from communication apprehension.

Based upon the literature reviewed, the following hypotheses were generated relating communication apprehension, biological gender and gender stereotypes to the practice of sending non-occasion greeting cards:

- H₁: Females will choose to send more non-occasion greeting cards than males in pre-dating situations.
- H₂: Females will choose to send more non-occasion greeting cards than males in friendship situations.
- H₃: Females will choose to send more non-occasion greeting cards than males in comforting situations.
- H₄: High communication apprehensives will choose to send more non-occasion greeting cards than low communication apprehensives in pre-dating situations.
- H₅: High communication apprehensives will choose to send more non-occasion greeting cards than low communication apprehensives in friendship situations.
- H₆: High communication apprehensives will choose to send more non-occasion greeting cards than low communication apprehensives in comforting situations.
- H₇: Feminine subjects will choose to send more non-occasion greeting cards than masculine or neutral subjects in pre-dating situations.
- H₈: Feminine subjects will choose to send more non-occasion

greeting cards than masculine or neutral subjects in friendship situations.

H₉: Feminine subjects will choose to send more non-occasion greeting cards than masculine or neutral subjects in comforting situations.

H₁₀: Feminine subjects will choose to send non-occasion greeting cards as the safest medium of communication.

H₁₁: Masculine subjects will choose visiting in person as the safest medium of communication.

H₁₂: Low communication apprehensives will choose visiting in person the safest medium of communication.

H₁₃: High communication apprehensives will choose either sending a non-occasion greeting card or telephoning as the safest medium of communication.

H₁₄: Females will choose sending non-occasion greeting cards as the communication medium requiring the least amount of effort while males will choose visiting in person as requiring the least amount of effort.

H₁₅: Low communication apprehensives will choose visiting in person as the communication medium requiring the least amount of effort.

H₁₆: High communication apprehensives will choose either sending a non-occasion greeting card or telephone as the communication medium requiring the least amount of effort.

Method

Subjects

Participants in this study were students enrolled in Speech Communication 1310 at Eastern Illinois University who were instructed by teaching assistants. This population was primarily freshman and sophomore students. The course is a general education requirement which constitutes a random sample of majors. Three hundred and ten students were given surveys while 286 samples completed the surveys correctly--answering every question with one only one answer. This yielded a mortality rate of 0.0774.

Apparatus

The instrument used was a four-page survey (see Appendix). The first section was the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI). The BSRI is a sixty question instrument that allows subjects to describe their personalities with adjectives of masculinity, femininity, and neutrality. Twenty of the items measure masculinity; 20 measure femininity; and 20 measure neutrality. Participants were to respond to all items using a rating scale assigning values from one to seven as to whether the trait was "never or almost never true" of their personalities to "always or almost always true."

The second section was the 20-question form of the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA)

(McCroskey, 1970). Self-report is one of the most widely used methods of measuring communication apprehension. The PRCA asked subjects to use values from one to five for "strongly agree with the statement" to "strongly disagree with the statement," respectively. The items asked subjects to record their feelings on participating in interpersonal as well as public speaking situations.

The third section was comprised of three scenarios inquiring how the subject would respond in a pre-dating encounter, a friendship situation, and a comforting situation, respectively. A fourth item measured the level of safety associated with several communication media and the fifth question measured the effort expended in using a communication medium. The final question asked subjects to record their biological gender.

Reliability

The BSRI test proved to be reliable when tested over a four-week interval at the following levels: masculinity $r = .90$; femininity $r = .90$; and neutrality $r = .93$ (Bem, 1974, p. 160). The PRCA reliability figures of the forms with 10, 20, and 25 questions are correlated at a consistent $r = .90$ (McCroskey, 1984, p. 94).

Validity

The BSRI has effectively predicted gender behavior and has been validated by repeated experimentation. Studies

have shown that subjects behave consistently with the personality choices recorded on the BSRI (Bem, 1974, 1977).

The PRCA has overwhelming validity in predicting communication apprehension in both public and private settings. The focus of this study was interpersonal communication and the PRCA has been validated to predict apprehension in interpersonal encounters (Beatty, 1984, 1987; Klopff, 1984; McCroskey, 1984b; Phillips, 1984).

Ten instructors in the speech communication department at Eastern Illinois University validated the three scenarios by matching the purpose of the encounter with the correct scenario.

Procedure

Subjects were sampled from the basic speech classes during the week of August 23-30, 1991. Instructors gave oral instructions for subjects to answer each question and to work quickly. Subjects took an average of fifteen minutes to complete the four-page survey. Answers were recorded directly on the test forms.

Upon completion, a number was written in the upper right-hand corner of each test form for future reference. Graduate students assisted in the compilation of answers onto recording forms in the following manner.

On the BSRI, masculinity scores were calculated by starting with item one and adding the numbers in every third

one thereafter for a total masculinity score. Femininity scores began on item two and included every third item thereafter, while neutrality scores began with item three and included every third item thereafter.

The PRCA was tabulated by assigning numeric values to letters a through e of either a = 1 on questions measuring low apprehension or a = 5 on questions measuring high apprehension. Those numbers were added for a PRCA total score.

The final five questions dealt with the specific dependent variables of pre-dating behavior, comforting, friendship, safety of medium, and effort of medium, respectively. Each had the following choices available and the following numeric values were assigned to the responses:

- 1 = sending a non-occasion greeting card and signing one's name
- 2 = sending a non-occasion greeting card and writing a message inside
- 3 = telephoning
- 4 = visiting in person
- 5 = waiting/doing nothing for the time being.

Graduate students recorded all the numeric values on the compilation sheets. These sheets of condensed information were then entered into the computer using the Number Cruncher Statistical System (NCSS). In so doing, the BSRI score was entered according to the highest total such

as masculinity, femininity, or neutrality with a 1, 2, 3, respectively. The PRCA score was entered as a 1 for "low communication apprehension" if the subject scored a 65 or less on the PRCA. A 2 was entered for a "high communication apprehension" when the subject scored a 66 or higher on the PRCA. The answers to the five dependent variable items were recorded using numbers 1 through 5 as shown above.

Biological gender was assigned as 1 = male, and 2 = female.

The NCSS compiled the statistics and generated tables using a cross tabulation analysis.

Insert Tables 1-7 about here

Results

The first hypothesis stated that females will choose to send more non-occasion greeting cards than males in pre-dating situations. The significant differences in Table 1 indicate that 20.1% of females chose to send non-occasion greeting cards and to write a message inside while only 4.6% of males would do so. Sending a card and simply signing one's name was chosen by 2.3% of the females and 0.9% of the males. Using the telephone was chosen by 35.6% of the females and by 19.4% of the males. Visiting in person was chosen by 42% of the females and 72.2% of the males. This lends partial support to hypothesis one because females

chose to send more cards with personalized messages enclosed, but not significantly more cards simply signing one's name.

The second hypothesis stated that females will choose to send more non-occasion greeting cards than males in friendship situations. The significant differences in Table 2 indicate that 30.2% would choose to write a personal message in a non-occasion greeting card to send to a friend while 10.1% of males would do so. No significant differences were revealed among males and females in choosing to sign one's name in a pre-printed greeting card to convey friendship. This lends partial support to hypothesis two.

The third hypothesis stated females will choose to send more non-occasion greeting cards than males in comforting situations. The significant differences in Table 3 indicate that 26.4% of females would choose to send a non-occasion greeting card and to personalize it with a written message while 13.0% of males would do so. No significant differences appeared between genders in choosing to sign one's name in a pre-printed greeting card. This lends partial support to hypothesis three.

Hypotheses four through six stated that high communication apprehensives will choose to send more non-occasion greeting cards than low communication apprehensives

in pre-dating, friendship, and comforting situations. No statistically significant results were revealed. Therefore, hypotheses four through six were not supported.

Hypotheses seven through nine dealt with gender preference scores using the BSRI and their relationship to pre-dating, friendship, and comforting situations. The significant differences in Table 4 indicate that the only statistically significant difference existed in the pre-dating situation where 20.7% of feminine subjects chose to write a personal message in a non-occasion greeting card while only 6.8% of males did so. Thus, hypothesis seven which stated that feminine subjects will choose to send more non-occasion greeting cards than masculine or neutral subjects in pre-dating situations was supported. Hypotheses eight and nine dealing with feminine subjects choosing to send more non-occasion cards in friendship and comforting situations, respectively, were not supported.

The general relationship between biological gender and gender stereotypes was noteworthy. Of the sample, 26% were males who tested masculine, 41% were females who tested feminine, 8% were males who tested feminine, 16% were females who tested masculine, 4% were females who tested neutral, and 4% were males who tested neutral.

The tenth hypothesis stated that feminine subjects will choose to send non-occasion greeting cards as the safest

medium of communication. The significant differences in Table 5 indicate that 49.7% of feminine subjects chose to visit in person as the safest medium while only 22.1% of feminine subjects chose to write a personal message in a non-occasion greeting card and 1.4% chose to sign one's name in the pre-printed non-occasion greeting card. Thus, hypothesis ten was not supported.

The eleventh hypothesis stated that masculine subjects would choose visiting in person as the safest medium of communication. The significant results in Table 5 indicate that 67.5% of masculine subjects would choose to visit in person. Thus, hypothesis 11 was supported.

The twelfth hypothesis stated that low communication apprehensives would choose visiting in person as the safest medium of communication. The significant differences in Table 6 indicate that 67.3% of low communication apprehensives would choose to visit in person. Thus, hypothesis 12 was supported.

The thirteenth hypothesis stated that high communication apprehensives would choose either sending a non-occasion greeting card or telephoning as the safest medium of communication. The significant differences in Table 6 indicate that 2.6% of high communication apprehensives would choose to sign one's name in a pre-printed non-occasion greeting card, 17.9% would choose to

write a personal message in a non-occasion greeting card, and 36.8% would choose to use the telephone. However, 42.7% of high communication apprehensives would choose to visit in person. Thus, hypothesis 13 was not supported.

The fourteenth hypothesis stated females would choose sending a non-occasion greeting card as the communication medium requiring the least amount of effort while males would choose visiting in person as requiring the least amount of effort. There were no statistically significant results. Thus, hypothesis 14 was not supported.

The fifteenth hypothesis stated low communication apprehensives would choose visiting in person as the communication medium requiring the least amount of effort. The significant differences in Table 7 revealed that 53.6% of low communication apprehensives would choose visiting in person as the communication medium requiring the least amount of effort. Thus, hypothesis 15 was supported.

The sixteenth hypothesis stated high communication apprehensives would choose sending a non-occasion greeting card or telephoning as the communication medium requiring the least amount of effort. The significant differences in Table 7 revealed that only 23.9% of high communication apprehensives would choose to send a non-occasion card and 6.0% would choose to telephone. The majority, 70.1%, of high communication apprehensives would choose to visit in

person. Thus, hypothesis 16 was not supported.

Discussion and Conclusions

The sending of non-occasion greeting cards can be related significantly to biological gender, but not to gender stereotype scores on the BSRI or to the condition of communication apprehension. The relationship between biological gender and sending cards was discovered in the pilot study (Adams, 1990) and was significantly supported in this study with 15.6% more females than males sending a non-occasion card with a personalized message inside. Rosendahl (1989) found that 90% of all non-occasion greeting card senders are females and this study's results confirm that more females will send and thus purchase non-occasion greeting cards.

The first hypothesis dealt with the behaviors elicited in pre-dating situations and the pilot study found that 49% of females send non-occasion greeting cards to the opposite sex. The females in this study confirmed that they do send cards to the opposite sex, but this study added the motive of establishing a relationship as a reason for sending the cards. In both studies, females chose to write a personalized message in the cards instead of simply signing one's name to the pre-printed lyrics in the card. Meer (1986) reported that more than 25% of all adults said greeting cards have played a significant role in their

romantic lives and this study suggests that if the relationship escalates, greeting cards may have been the inspiration.

However, while significantly more females than males send cards, the majority of males and females chose to visit in person. This suggests that such subjects do not tend to avoid face-to-face interaction in pre-dating encounters.

In the pilot study, females sent the majority of non-occasion greeting cards to same-sex friends, while only 12% of males said they sent cards to friends of the same sex, which suggested that card-sending was considered a way for females to maintain friendship with other females. Ninety percent of people surveyed by Meer (1986) said that they respond in some manner when they receive a non-occasion greeting card, whether it be with a phone call (46%), a return card (30%), or a letter (26%). This suggests that sending cards is a good medium for gaining some feedback from friends. However, the results of this study found that while 30.2% of females would send a personalized card to a friend, 34.3% would choose to telephone and 34.3% would choose to visit in person. Fewer males (10.1%) chose to send a card with a personalized message which suggests that the practice of sending cards to friends is more characteristic of females.

In comforting situations, more females (26.4%) than

males (13.0%) chose to send greeting cards to show support for those in need. This may suggest that more females are more sensitive to the needs of others.

However, the behavior of subjects in comforting situations was thought to be more dependent on the condition of communication apprehension than on biological gender or BSRI score. This is based on the findings of Booth-Butterfield and Butterfield (1986) who found that persons with high communication apprehension were less willing to interact and to provide comfort to another. Samter and Burleson's research (1984) contradicted this finding with research that people who found communicating with family and friends unrewarding engaged in more comforting behavior. The results of this study found that there are no significant differences between subjects high in CA and those low in CA in their choosing to send non-occasion greeting cards in comforting situations.

Communication apprehension research also related its condition with behaviors in friendship situations in that high CAs had bleak peer relationships (Hurt & Pruss, 1978) and experience great loneliness (Wheeless, Zakahi, & Chan, 1988; Zakahi & Duran, 1982). However, Richmond (1984) discovered the tendency for high CAs to develop long-lasting friendships and to hang on to them. This is characteristic of the scenario described in the instrument used in this

study as it measured what subjects do to maintain old friendships while away at college. The results found that the condition of communication apprehension has no significant bearing upon the communication behavior in friendship situations.

Subjects with high CA have a strong desire to find the "one and only" and to hang on to them (Richmond, 1984). Results show that significantly more high CAs did not choose sending non-occasion greeting cards as a behavior in a pre-dating situation.

The BSRI has effectively predicted gender behavior in repeated experiments (Bem, 1974, 1977). However, the only significant results were found in this study to link non-occasion greeting cards with gender stereotypes in pre-dating scenarios. Significantly more feminine subjects (20.7%) than masculine subjects (6.8%) would choose to write a personalized message in a non-occasion greeting card. Moreover, the significant differences primarily occurred with the biological gender.

The situational nature of communication apprehension was measured in the pre-dating, friendship, and comforting scenarios depicted on the instrument. Communication apprehension can be more enduring and elicits anxiety in a variety of contexts. Two items on the instrument dealt with this more generalized view of CA by measuring safety and

effort required in choosing a communication medium.

Several significant results were found with the independent variables of communication apprehension and gender stereotypes recorded on the BSRI. The majority of feminine subjects rated visiting in person as the safest medium (49.7%), telephoning as the second safest (26.9%), followed by writing a personalized message in a card (22.1), and lastly signing one's name in a card (1.4%). Masculine subjects rated the following choices from safest to least safe: visiting in person (67.5%), telephoning (22.5%), writing a personalized message in a card (6.7%), and signing one's name to a card (3.3%).

The research of McCroskey and that of Klopff and Cambra (1979) does not agree about whether oral CA affects apprehension about writing too. The results of this study found that high CAs ranked the choices in the order of most safe to least safe as follows: visiting in person (42.7%), telephoning (36.8%), writing in a card (17.9%), and signing a card (2.6%). Low CAs found visiting in person safest (67.3%), telephoning (18.5%), writing a personalized message in a card (12.5%), and signing one's card (1.8%). This suggests that communication apprehension does not make subjects prefer writing over speaking.

The effort required of each communication medium was ranked in the same order by low CAs and high CAs as follows

(from most effort required to least effort required):
visiting in person, sending a card, and telephoning.
Therefore, the independent variable of CA did not make
subjects avoid face-to-face interaction.

Implications

While this is a relatively new area of communication research, the greeting card industry constantly studies trends in card sending. They are aware that women purchase the majority of non-occasion cards and are catering to that market. They also conduct research to see how card-buyers view themselves and have found they consider themselves friendlier and more intelligent than people who do not send cards (Meer, 1986). If this study had revealed that gender stereotypes rather than biological gender predicted greeting card sending, it would have been a substantial finding. The condition of communication apprehension did not significantly determine the sending of non-occasion cards in any situation.

The situational approach of the instrument used in this study allowed a study of specific behaviors in certain contexts. The dependent variable that affected the choices was, again, biological gender with females sending the majority of cards in all situations.

This study confirms that the greeting card industries are on the right track in catering to the tastes of females

and should continue to do so. Nothing significant suggests that suffering from high communication apprehension will make subjects send cards to avoid face-to-face interaction. This also suggests that communication apprehension may not as much of a determinant of behavior in interpersonal contexts as it is in public speaking situations.

Limitations of study

This study was conducted using the PRCA which, although it is the primary self-report instrument used in measuring communication apprehension, has been criticized for being more oriented toward public contexts than interpersonal encounters. Another form of the PRCA exists which has been less criticized and perhaps would be more relevant to interpersonal contexts.

The subjects in this study were students in a required public speaking course. However, the sections that were surveyed were those offered at times which are primarily filled with new freshmen. If freshmen enroll in speech during their first semester at school, there is a lesser chance that there will be as many high CAs enrolled as high CAs may tend to put speech off until a later semester. Therefore, this may not have been a totally representative sampling pool.

Using a self-report instrument has proven effective for measuring CA and gender stereotypes. However, when

reporting behavior in specific situations such as the three scenarios used in this report, there is a possibility that a social desirability effect intervened. "Visiting in person" might seem like the "correct" answer. In real life, the visit may not have transpired. Therefore, field observations (perhaps done at greeting card counters) where actual behavior is recorded, instead of intended behavior, might have yielded different results.

The scenarios, while testing valid by a sample of faculty at Eastern Illinois University might have lacked information that was relevant to determining actions in the particular situation. For instance, adding personality characteristics (such as if the friend or potential dating partner is shy or outspoken) might have gathered more realistic answers and changed behavior accordingly.

Clarification of the terms such as "safety" of communication media might have altered the findings. "Safety" is a broad term that could connote many meanings such as freedom from evaluation or freedom from misinterpretation. The connotation may have colored the subjects' responses.

The BSRI was published nearly 20 years ago. Many changes have occurred in the past decades with trends showing a blending of gender stereotypes. Newer instruments, such as the one presented by McKee and Jones

(1991), may more accurately measure current gender role perceptions and make future research more valid.

While this study did not discover significant effects of CA on non-occasion greeting card sending, based upon existing research on the subject, a relationship between the two variables seems plausible. Therefore, a different research design, perhaps incorporating a field study, might yield more significant findings. The practice of sending non-occasion greeting cards has potential to become a new area of communication research if this study has its intended heuristic value.

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Table 1

Cross Tabulation ResultsBiological gender and pre-dating behavior

Counts

Row Percentage

Contribution to Chi-Square

Female	<u>Biological Gender</u>	
	Male	
Card/Sign	1 0.9 0.4	4 2.3 0.3
Card/Write	5 *4.6 7.0	35 *20.1 4.3
Telephone	21 *19.4 3.7	62 *35.6 2.3
Visit in person	78 *72.2 7.0	73 *42.0 4.4
Wait/do nothing	3 2.8 3.0	0 0.0 1.9

* = significant differences

 $\chi^2 = 34.14$ df = 4

p = 0.0000

a = .05

Table 2

Cross Tabulation ResultsBiological gender and friendship Behavior

Counts

Row Percentage

Contribution to Chi-Square

	<u>Biological Gender</u>	
	Male	Female
Card/Sign	1 0.9 0.0	2 1.2 0.0
Card/Write	11 *10.1 7.4	52 *30.2 4.7
Telephone	57 52.3 3.2	59 34.3 2.0
Visit in person	40 36.7 0.1	59 34.3 0.0

* = significant differences

 $\chi^2 = 17.45$ df = 3

p = .0006

a = .05

Table 3

Cross Tabulation ResultsBiological gender and comforting behavior

Counts		
Row Percentage		
Contribution to Chi-Square		
	<u>Biological Gender</u>	
	Male	
Female		
Card/Sign	0.0	6
	0.0	3.4
	2.3	1.4
Card/Write	14	46
	*13.0	*26.4
	3.5	2.2
Telephone	56	76
	51.9	43.7
	0.6	0.4
Visit in person	31	41
	28.7	23.6
	0.4	0.3
Wait/do nothing	7	5
	6.5	2.9
	1.3	0.8

* = significant differences

 $\chi^2 = 13.09$ df = 4

p = .0108

a = .05

Table 4

Cross Tabulation ResultsBSRI score and pre-dating behavior

Counts

Row Percentage

Contribution to Chi-Square

Neutral	<u>BSRI Score</u>		
	Masculine	Feminine	
Card/Sign	1 0.8 0.6	4 2.8 0.8	0 0.0 0.4
Card/Write	8 *6.8 4.5	30 *20.7 4.5	2 9.5 0.3
Telephone	28 23.7 1.2	49 33.8 1.0	6 28.6 0.0
Visit in person	78 66.1 3.3	62 42.8 3.3	13 61.9 0.3
Wait/do nothing	3 2.5 2.5	0 0.0 1.5	0 0.0 0.2

* = significant differences

 $\chi^2 = 17.74$ df = 3

p = 0.0005

a = .05

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Table 5

Cross Tabulation Results

BSRI score and safety of medium

Counts

Row Percentage

Contribution to Chi-Square

Neutral	<u>BSRI Score</u>		
	Masculine	Feminine	
Card/Sign	4 3.3 0.9	2 1.4 0.4	0 0.0 0.4
Card/Write	8 *6.7 5.6	32 *22.1 4.8	3 14.3 0.0
Telephone	27 22.5 0.5	39 26.9 0.1	8 38.1 1.2
Visit in person	81 *67.5 2.3	72 *49.7 1.4	10 47.6 0.3

* = significant differences

$\chi^2 = 17.86$ df = 6

p = 0.0066

a = .05

Table 6

Cross Tabulation ResultsCommunication apprehension and safety of medium

Counts

Row Percentage

Contribution to Chi-Square

Communication Apprehension

	Low	High
Card/Sign	3 1.8 0.1	3 2.6 0.1
Card/Write	21 12.5 0.6	21 17.9 0.8
Telephone	31 *18.5 3.7	43 *36.8 5.2
Visit in person	113 *67.3 3.0	50 *42.7 4.3

* = significant differences

 $\chi^2 = 17.74$ df = 3

p = 0.0005

a = .05

Table 7

Cross Tabulation ResultsCommunication apprehension and effort required

Counts

Row Percentage

Contribution to Chi-Square

Communication Apprehension

	Low	High
Card Sending	57 34.3 1.0	28 23.9 1.5
Telephone	17 10.2 0.6	7 6.0 0.9
Visit in person	89 *53.6 1.3	82 *70.1 1.8

* = significant differences

 $\chi^2 = 9.13$ df = 3

p = 0.0275

a = .05

Appendix

The following are sixty personality characteristics. You are to use those characteristics in order to describe yourself. That is, you are to indicate, on a scale from 1 to 7, how true of you these various characteristics are. Please do not leave any characteristic unmarked.

Example: ____ Sly

Mark a 1 if it is **never or almost never true** that you are sly.

Mark a 2 if it is **usually not true** that you are sly.

Mark a 3 if it is **sometimes but infrequently true** that you are sly.

Mark a 4 if it is **occasionally true** that you are sly.

Mark a 5 if it is **often true** that you are sly.

Mark a 6 if it is **usually true** that you are sly.

Mark a 7 if it is **always or almost always true** that you are sly.

- ____ 1. Self-reliant
- ____ 2. Yielding
- ____ 3. Helpful
- ____ 4. Defends own beliefs
- ____ 5. Cheerful
- ____ 6. Moody
- ____ 7. Independent
- ____ 8. Shy
- ____ 9. Conscientious
- ____ 10. Athletic
- ____ 11. Affectionate
- ____ 12. Theatrical
- ____ 13. Assertive
- ____ 14. Flatterable
- ____ 15. Happy
- ____ 16. Has strong personality
- ____ 17. Loyal
- ____ 18. Unpredictable
- ____ 19. Forceful
- ____ 20. Feminine
- ____ 21. Reliable
- ____ 22. Analytical
- ____ 23. Sympathetic
- ____ 24. Jealous
- ____ 25. Has leadership abilities
- ____ 26. Sensitive to the needs of others
- ____ 27. Truthful
- ____ 28. Willing to take risks
- ____ 29. Understanding
- ____ 30. Secretive

- _____ 31. Makes decisions easily
- _____ 32. Compassionate
- _____ 33. Sincere
- _____ 34. Self-sufficient
- _____ 35. Eager to soothe hurt feelings
- _____ 36. Conceited
- _____ 37. Dominant
- _____ 38. Soft-spoken
- _____ 39. Likeable
- _____ 40. Masculine
- _____ 41. Warm
- _____ 42. Solemn
- _____ 43. Willing to take a stand
- _____ 44. Tender
- _____ 45. Friendly
- _____ 46. Aggressive
- _____ 47. Gullible
- _____ 48. Inefficient
- _____ 49. Acts as a leader
- _____ 50. Childlike
- _____ 51. Adaptable
- _____ 52. Individualistic
- _____ 53. Does not use harsh language
- _____ 54. Unsystematic
- _____ 55. Competitive
- _____ 56. Loves children
- _____ 57. Tactful
- _____ 58. Ambitious
- _____ 59. Gentle
- _____ 60. Conventional

INSTRUCTIONS for items 61-80: Below are 20 statements about feelings on communicating with other people. Mark the degree to which the statements apply to you by marking whether you:

- (a) strongly agree
- (b) agree
- (c) are undecided
- (d) disagree
- (e) strongly disagree

Work quickly, but carefully. Just read the statement and mark your first impression.

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 61. While participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance I feel very nervous. | a b c d e |
| 62. I have no fear of facing an audience. | a b c d e |
| 63. I look forward to expressing my opinion at meetings. | a b c d e |
| 64. I look forward to an opportunity to speak in public. | a b c d e |

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65. I find the prospect of speaking mildly pleasant. a b c d e
66. When communicating, my posture feels strained and unnatural. a b c d e
67. I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions. a b c d e
68. Although I talk fluently with friends, I am at a loss for words on the platform. a b c d e
69. My hands tremble when I try to handle objects on the platform. a b c d e
70. I always avoid speaking in public if possible. a b c d e
71. I feel that I am more fluent when talking to people than most other people are. a b c d e
72. I am fearful and tense all the while I am speaking before an audience. a b c d e
73. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I speak before an audience. a b c d e
74. Although I am nervous just before getting up, I soon forget my fears and enjoy the experience. a b c d e
75. Conversing with people who hold positions of authority causes me to be fearful and tense. a b c d e
76. I dislike to use my body and voice expressively. a b c d e
77. I feel relaxed and comfortable while speaking. a b c d e
78. I feel self-conscious when I am called upon to answer a question or give an opinion in class. a b c d e
79. I face the prospect of making a speech with complete confidence. a b c d e
80. I would enjoy presenting a speech on a local television show. a b c d e

81. You are at an end-of-the-year school party and have just met a person of the opposite sex, in whom you are really interested. The next day, he/she calls to exchange addresses. You want to do something before you go home for the summer so that your new acquaintance does not forget about you before the next semester begins. You decide to:

- a. _____ telephone your new friend.
- b. _____ send her/him a nice card and simply sign your name.
- c. _____ go visit him/her to say goodbye face-to-face.
- d. _____ send him/her a card and inside write a message.
- e. _____ wait until fall to continue your interaction.

82. You are a new freshman at a university away from your hometown. You have promised to keep in touch with your friends and family, but time has gotten away from you. It has been two months since you saw your best friend and you are feeling guilty. You decide to:

- a. _____ send him/her an appropriate card you found in the University bookstore and write a message inside.
- b. _____ telephone your friend, pray you don't get the answering machine, and chalk up the long-distance expense.
- c. _____ send him/her an appropriate card you found in the University bookstore and sign your name.
- d. _____ forget about old friends; college is filled with new ones.
- e. _____ plan to visit your friend and renew ties face-to-face.

83. Your good friend just got married and moved away. Now his/her spouse has been diagnosed with cancer. You learned of this from a mutual friend and feel you should do something to let your friend know you care. You know you will see your friend in one month when he/she returns for the holidays. Until then, you will:

- a. _____ send your friend a thoughtful friendship card and simply sign your name.
- b. _____ telephone your friend and express your concern.
- c. _____ wait until you see your friend in person and convey your sentiments in person.
- d. _____ send a card with your own message to show your concern.
- e. _____ plan a trip to visit your friend and show your concern in person.

84. Which do you consider the safest medium of communication?

- a. _____ speaking to others face-to-face
- b. _____ writing your own messages and sending them to others in a greeting card.
- c. _____ talking on the telephone.
- d. _____ sending a pre-printed greeting card and simply signing your name.

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85. Which medium of communication requires the most effort on your part to use?

- a. ____ buying and sending a greeting card
- b. ____ arranging to meet and converse face-to-face
- c. ____ using the telephone